

# UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## GEORGIAN CONFLICT ZONES: ABKHAZIA & SOUTH OSSETIA IN 2007



### CORE COUNTRY DATA

Population under 18 (thousands)	1080
U5 mortality rate	45
Infant mortality rate	41
Maternal mortality ratio (1990-2005, reported)	52
Primary school enrolment ratio, 2000-2005, net (male/female)	93/92
% U1 fully immunized (DPT3)	84
% population using improved drinking water sources	82
Estimated no. of people (all ages) living with HIV, 2005 (thousands)	5.6
% U5 suffering from moderate and severe underweight	3

Source: *The State of the World's Children 2007*

**NOTE:** Numbers do not include the conflict zones. High levels of insecurity have prevented the collection of core data and condition indicators in these regions.

### Summary of UNICEF financial needs for 2007

Sector	US\$
Health	350,000
Water and environmental sanitation	150,000
Education	250,000
Child protection	300,000
Programme support	150,000
<b>Total*</b>	<b>1,200,000</b>

\* The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 7 per cent. The actual recovery rate on contributions will be calculated in accordance with UNICEF Executive Board Decision 2006/7 dated 9 June 2006.

## 1. CRITICAL ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Among the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent states, Georgia remains one of the most vulnerable from a humanitarian perspective. Of the four frozen conflicts in the former Soviet Union, two are located on Georgian territory. Civil wars in the early 1990s resulted in Abkhazia and South Ossetia winning independence, with both regions being administered by internationally unrecognized *de facto* governments ever since. The consistent lack of regular external support to the breakaway, conflict-affected areas of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is clearly reflected in the collapse of the welfare system and the decay of basic services. Both territories have a number of common features, not least of which up to 45,000 internally displaced children now living in Georgia proper. The overall disintegration of the social safety net – affecting all facilities in the conflict-affected areas – and a failure to provide a prompt and effective response to the needs of the population are also a common feature, as are the persistent and tense atmosphere of volatility related to the unresolved conflicts and the general feeling of hopelessness for the future; the emergence of new and disruptive social behaviours; an increase in criminality; and a general lack of income-generating opportunities.

Although formally in place, health services are deprived of any means to assist the population. Hospitals, polyclinics and maternity facilities are in desperate need of rehabilitation and all existing equipment is either broken or outdated. There is no continuous supply of essential drugs to these facilities and health care providers have a very low capacity for delivery of quality medical care. There is no access to new research or the opportunity for skill upgrading, which is reflected in outdated practices related to maternal and child health, such as advocacy of infant formula instead of breastfeeding and the separation of mothers and babies after birth. Homes and public facilities have no access to safe water or electricity and in many health and education facilities these resources are not available at all.

The low quality of education for children in the conflict zones is also a constant concern. Most schools lack any basic or advanced educational equipment and the system barely survives on the goodwill of teachers and parents who are asked to contribute to expenses for salaries and basic facility maintenance. Schools function on an outdated curriculum where life skills-based methodologies or advanced educational support is non-existent. Peace, tolerance and conflict resolution education is also wholly absent and is an area where UNICEF has the ability to be highly influential. Sport programmes and recreation facilities are largely neglected due to lack of funds and other resources. Students have no access to healthy and safe school environments where they can take part in sport and recreational activities to learn basic life skills, develop their potential and be challenged and stimulated. Many children whose parents are overwhelmed with the task of basic survival are left to cope on their own, and there has been a reported increase in violence and abuse within families. The general collapse of social services has resulted in a lack of any form of psychosocial support or social protection for the most vulnerable parts of the population (persons with special needs, victims of abuse, drug addicts, etc.). Although the territories have largely been cleared of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), and casualties are decreasing year to year, accidents are still an issue. The victims – primarily children – are not afforded any physical or psychological support and parents lack any guidance on how to cope with their children. HIV/AIDS is just beginning to become recognized as an important issue in the conflict zones, but both *de facto* governments lack any facilities, supplies or expertise to deal with prevention and treatment.

While the UN is granted access to Abkhazia, the *de facto* authorities have been known to deny NGOs and other humanitarian aid groups. This compounds the lack of regular external aid and support to the territory. South Ossetia is less complicated to enter than Abkhazia, but the security situation is more tense and unpredictable. Random shootings fuel tensions and indiscriminate attacks in both Ossetian and Georgian villages are common. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) often restricts staff access to the territory, as provocations from both sides are frequent.

## 2. KEY ACTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2006

Despite this tense political and military situation between the Georgian and breakaway capitals, UNICEF has established itself as an important player in the conflict zones. In responding to the humanitarian needs of the war-affected Abkhaz and South Ossetian populations, UNICEF receives strong support from the Georgian government and holds the trust of the *de facto* authorities. The Country Office also works very closely with other UN agencies operating in the conflict zones and, wherever possible, coordinates joint interventions to increase overall effectiveness.

Throughout 2006, UNICEF focused its humanitarian assistance primarily on supply initiatives to the health and education sectors. While continuing to supply routine Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) vaccines to the breakaway territories, the desperately under-equipped health care systems have also been supported with maternal and primary health care equipment and essential drugs. These significant equipment upgrades for maternity hospitals, polyclinics and rural medical points have improved the quality and delivery of health care for close to 50,000 women and children. With increased access to South Ossetia, an estimated 45,000 women and children benefited from UNICEF's upgrade of the cold-chain equipment, as well as from the provision of new vaccine refrigerators and generators and electricity stabilizers to ensure an uninterrupted power supply.

The education sectors of both territories, comprising 250 schools and approximately 33,000 students, have been supported with school supplies and recreation equipment, helping to improve the education process and ensure the 'Right to Play'. In addition, during 2006 some 27,000 children in Abkhazia gained access to safe drinking water through the distribution of safe water tanks and calcium hypochlorite tablets. Within the UN Country Team (UNCT), UNICEF also took responsibility for all Avian Influenza (AI) communication throughout Georgia, including the conflict zones. A series of AI communication brochures and posters were designed for those groups especially at risk, primarily children, and distributed through schools and health care facilities, reaching an estimated 60,000 women and children.

## 3. PLANNED HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR 2007

### **Coordination and partnership**

UNICEF works closely with the other UN agencies in the conflict zones and works through a direct memorandum of understanding with the DPKO United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in all Abkhazia operations. UNICEF also partners with international NGOs in supply and training initiatives in the health and education sectors, and local NGOs in mine survivor assistance.

### **Regular programme**

UNICEF's emergency programme is closely linked with the overall Georgian Country Programme of Cooperation, most notably in the provision of EPI vaccines and supplies for the annual state immunization plan in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. By ensuring that the Georgian immunization plan covers the conflict-affected areas, the Georgian Ministry of Health and the *de facto* Abkhaz and Ossetian governments now work together in transport, distribution and reporting. Breastfeeding campaigns and baby-friendly hospital initiatives in Georgia are also mirrored in the conflict zones, as are the reduction of micronutrient deficiencies and the provision of iodized salt and oil.

With a reputation for reliability established with the *de facto* authorities, and the full support of the central government, UNICEF is looking to expand its support to the conflict-affected areas in 2007. While continuing material support initiatives, especially in the education system, UNICEF intends to use its strong position to move into training and capacity-building.

### **Health (US\$ 350,000)**

Some 155,000 women and children will benefit directly or indirectly from the following initiatives:

- Strengthen the immunization programme through skills upgrading of all professional staff – immunization in practice, immunization services and cold-chain training;
- Upgrade the competencies and skills of relevant health care employees to implement the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) initiative in maternity facilities and children's polyclinics;
- Upgrade competencies for baby-friendly hospitals, support exclusive breastfeeding programmes and community-based awareness campaigns;
- Develop HIV/AIDS health education curricula and train teachers to enable children and teenagers to make healthy choices and adopt safer behaviour;
- Provide antiretroviral and other treatment-related support to the newly established HIV/AIDS Clinic in Abkhazia.

### **Water and environmental sanitation (US\$ 150,000)**

Some 33,000 conflict-affected children and their families will be reached through the following key activities:

- Distribute safe water tanks and calcium hypochlorite to all schools and health centres in South Ossetia;
- Promote health and hygiene education and hygiene awareness programmes in 250 schools, complementing existing water safety supply initiatives;
- Continue to procure and distribute de-worming tablets to children in the conflict zones through schools and immunization programmes.

### **Education (US\$ 250,000)**

A total of 33,000 conflict-affected children and 2,000 teachers will benefit through the following key activities:

- Train elementary and secondary schoolteachers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in interactive learning methods, with an emphasis on life skills, including HIV/AIDS, peace education and early childhood development;
- Restock Abkhaz and South Ossetian schools with essential teacher and student supplies for the 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 school years;
- Support the 'Right to Play' by equipping all schools in both regions with UNICEF standard sports equipment;
- Work through a local partner, organize and promote sports tournaments throughout schools in the breakaway regions; this will include Georgia proper, wherever possible, to support inter-ethnic dialogue among youth.

### **Child protection (US\$ 300,000)**

Some 33,000 school-aged children and teens, affected by the trauma or direct results of war, are targeted through the following key activities:

- Support youth centres in Tskhinvali (South Ossetia) and Sukhumi (Abkhazia) to develop confidence-building, leadership skills, conflict resolution and empowerment among the youth population;
- Train community-based social service providers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in the field of psychosocial support and counselling for children and youth;
- Support HALO Trust (de-mining NGO) in developing culturally appropriate and accessible mine-risk education communication materials for children and their families in Abkhazia and Zugdidi (Georgian side of ceasefire line);
- Support survivor assistance programme for landmine survivors, aimed at reintegration;
- Further develop and expand the annual summer camp for child landmine survivors.

**Programme support (US\$ 150,000)**

- Hire international staff to facilitate, coordinate and monitor project progress in the conflict zones (national staff being unable to travel to Abkhazia and South Ossetia due to the ethnic policy of *de facto* governments);
- Cover operating costs (travel, office space and a local staff member to be permanently based in both conflict zones).